

April 2021 Academic Updates

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Dear Saint Louis University community,

First, I want to thank each of you for your diligence in getting us to this point in the semester. We have successfully remained on campus more than two months after our semester began. I recognize that our COVID-19 numbers rose in the early-to-mid part of February, but through the efforts of our community, particularly our students, we have brought those numbers to a more manageable level.

As we continue the semester, I want to provide a few academic updates to the community and ask that everyone please be mindful of the stressful and demanding times in which we still find ourselves. Please read on for more information.

Extending grace to students during Ramadan

This year, Ramadan occurs April 12 to May 12, ending right before the start of final exams. I ask that faculty remember those members of our community who observe Ramadan and, whenever possible, please be flexible in making student accommodations for exams and/or assignments during the times that students are well into their daily fast (mid-to-late afternoon), or breaking their fast for the day (mid-evening). We have many students, faculty and staff who observe other religious traditions at SLU, and I want to ensure that we are being respectful to all members of our community.

TRIO Program Update

Last semester, in response to the loss of our federal grant for the TRIO-SSS program, which supported students from disadvantaged backgrounds, we decided to allocate University funds to continue this worthwhile program. As a reminder, the federal grant was lost because our students, within the TRIO-SSS program, were graduating at nearly the same rate as our traditional students. Yes, that's right. Federal dollars were pulled due to our program's success. The University is committed to continuing our service to students, who have historically been in the TRIO-SSS program.

We have created our own program for TRIO-SSS students - the [SOAR program](#) (Students' Opportunity for Achievement and Resources). This program will continue to focus on increasing retention and graduation rates for underrepresented student populations through academic and community programming and preparing students for post-graduation endeavors.

This program will provide comprehensive support to Pell Grant recipients, first-generation college students and students with registered disabilities to help them meet the academic and social challenges of a SLU education.

Current TRIO-SSS students have been notified of the creation of a University-funded program and assured that they will continue to receive the services and support that will help them succeed.

Recruitment of new students is underway with a goal of serving 200 total students in the 2021-2022 academic year. More information on the program can be found on the [SOAR website](#).

Sincerely,

Mike Lewis, Ph.D.
Provost